

REPORT

OF

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

COMMUNICATING,

In compliance with a resolution of the Senate, information as to what changes have been proposed in the armament of the United States mounted troops, with a view to economy and increased efficiency of that force on the frontiers; an estimate of the additional expense, if any, and the means provided, or necessary to be provided, for the same.

FEBRUARY 21, 1859.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and the Militia, and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *February 21, 1859.*

SIR: I have received the resolution of the Senate of the 19th instant, asking to be furnished with "information as to what changes have been proposed in the armament of the United States mounted troops, with a view to economy and increased efficiency of that force on the frontiers; an estimate of the additional expense, if any, and the means provided, or necessary to be provided, for paying the same."

In reply, I have the honor to state that the subject has had the serious consideration of this department, and was, some time since, referred to a board, consisting of some of the most distinguished officers in the mounted service, for their views as to the most practicable mode of increasing the efficiency of the mounted troops in that respect. A copy of their report is herewith transmitted. I have further to say that there are no means provided for paying the additional expense, and to enclose a copy of an estimate of the amount necessary, which, in January last, I communicated to the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means of the House of Representatives.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.

Hon. J. C. BRECKINRIDGE,
President of the Senate.

*Proceedings of a board of officers convened at Washington Arsenal, D. C.,
by virtue of the following orders:*

SPECIAL ORDERS, No. 23.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, February 16, 1858.

A board of officers, to consist of Brevet Brigadier General W. S. Harney, colonel 2d dragoons; Lieutenant Colonel J. E. Johnston, 1st cavalry; Major W. H. Bell, ordnance department; Brevet Colonel C. A. May, major 2d dragoons; Brevet Lieutenant Colonel W. J. Hardee, major 2d cavalry, will assemble at the Washington arsenal, at 11 o'clock a. m., on Thursday, the 18th instant, or as soon thereafter as practicable, for the examination of Colt's arms with breech attachment and pistol carbine. The board will make a detailed and minute report, and give an opinion as to the fitness of these weapons for our cavalry service. Captain T. J. Wood, 1st cavalry, is appointed recorder of the board.

By order of the Secretary of War.

S. COOPER, *Adjutant General.*

SPECIAL ORDERS, No. 24.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, February 17, 1858.

Brevet Lieutenant Colonel W. J. Hardee, major 2d cavalry, is relieved from serving on the board of officers instituted by "Special Orders, No. 23," of February 16, 1858, from the War Department, and Captain T. J. Wood, 1st cavalry, is detailed as a member of the same.

Captain Wood will report the proceeding of the board.

By order of the Secretary of War.

S. COOPER, *Adjutant General.*

The board met pursuant to the foregoing orders. Present, all the members.

The board examined three specimens of Colt's pistol carbine, of the following length of barrel, respectively: twelve, fifteen, and eighteen inches, and Colts' pistol, with a barrel seven inches long, with breech attachment.

To test the accuracy of fire, a number of shots was fired from all these arms at the following ranges: at one hundred yards, and at three hundred yards; at five hundred yards from the three specimens of the pistol carbine, and at two hundred yards from the pistol with breech attachment.

The result of these experiments was entirely satisfactory to the board, as to the accuracy of fire of the arms under examination.

To test the penetration of these arms a target of white pine boards, seasoned, one inch thick, with an interval of one inch and a quarter between the boards, and two feet by two in size, was used. The shots were fired at thirty yards from the target.

The carbine with 12-inch barrel penetrated 9 boards.

The carbine with 15-inch barrel penetrated $8\frac{1}{2}$ boards.

The carbine with 18-inch barrel penetrated 9 boards.

The pistol with breech attachment penetrated $7\frac{1}{2}$ boards.

The board consider Colt's pistol carbine and Colt's pistol with breech attachment superior for our cavalry service to any arm with which they are acquainted.

The board recommend the adoption of Colt's pistol (with breech attachment) and ammunition for the cavalry service, and that each trooper be furnished with two pistols, adjusted to the same breech, the barrel of each pistol to be eight inches long, of the calibre of the army revolver.

The board recommend that steel or malleable iron be substituted for the brass in the connexion of the breech attachment with the pistol.

The board recommend that the two swivels on the breech attachment and the swivel on the pistol be dispensed with; also recommend that the pistol be sighted for one, two, and three hundred yards.

The board recommend that one pistol be worn on the right side of the soldier, in a pouch attached to the sabre belt, and the other in the holster on the right side of the saddle, and that the breech attachment be carried in a suitable pouch attached to the left side of the rear of the saddle.

The board adjourned to meet at 1 o'clock p. m., February 19, 1858.

FRIDAY, *February 19, 1858.*

The board met pursuant to adjournment. Present, all the members.

The board recommend that, as Colt's pistols with barrels eight inches long cannot be procured in time for the operations of the approaching campaign, pistols with seven-inch barrels and the breech attachment be furnished for immediate use.

Having no further business to transact, the board adjourned *sine die*.

WM. S. HARNEY,

Colonel 2d Dragoons and Bvt. Brig. Gen., President.

THOMAS J. WOOD,

1st Cavalry, Recorder.

Estimate prepared, in accordance with instructions from the Secretary of War, of funds that will be required to procure pistol carbines for all the mounted regiments, viz :

Five regiments, 1,700 pistols each, 8,500 pistols, at \$51 36 per pair.....	\$218,280
Add one-fifth for loss and damage sustained in service.....	43,656
One hundred rounds of ammunition for each man, viz : 425,000 rounds of ammunition, at \$20 per thousand.....	8,500
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	270,436
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H. K. CRAIG,
Colonel of Ordnance.

ORDNANCE OFFICE, *November 19, 1858.*

WAR DEPARTMENT, *January 25, 1859.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the consideration and action of your committee, an estimate for arms for the use of the mounted regiments, which was received too late to accompany the annual estimates from this department.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.

Hon. JOHN S. PHELPS,
*Chairman Committee of Ways and Means,
House of Representatives.*